



# JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

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## Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson

During the past year a number of readers have sent in information concerning Johnsonian anecdotes which turn up in rather unusual places. We pass these on to you, not as certified additions to the Johnsonian scriptures, but as interesting stories about which we would like to know more. If you know where else these have appeared in print, or can give further evidence of their reliability and provenance, we beg you to send us the information. It ought to be of some value to scholars to authenticate as best we can all the ephemeral Johnsoniana which lies outside the main streams of Boswell and his chief rivals (We might add that Fritz Liebert (Yale) is actively engaged in major research in this field, and we are sure he will appreciate any help we can give).

### Thomas Newte

Lewis M. Knapp (Colo. College) calls our attention to some anecdotes of Johnson contained in a little-known work, Thomas Newte's *Prospects and Observations on a Tour in England and Scotland* (1791). Less than six months after the death of Johnson, on May 22, 1785, Newte stopped at Lichfield on his way north to Scotland. He recorded.

This was the birth-place of Dr. Samuel Johnson, of whom so much has been said, that it is but little that can remain for the curiosity of his greatest admirers. I was informed, however, of two singularities in this great genius, which, I think, have escaped the researches of all his biographers. There is a great iron ring fixed by a staple in a stone in the center of the market-place, which formerly served as a necessary instrument in the savage diversion of bull-bating. When Johnson happened, in his walks (for he paid an annual visit

to Litchfield) to pass by this spot, he would frequently, in the midst of those reveries in which he seemed to be involved, step aside, and stooping down, lay hold of the ring and pull it about, as if he had been trying whether he was able to extricate it from the stone in which it was fixed. The other remarkable particular concerning Dr. Johnson, which has not been mentioned, is, that he made it a point in those annual visits to the place of his nativity, to call on every person in that city with whom he had the least acquaintance; but that the instant he knocked at the door, he would without giving time for opening it, pass on to another, where he would do the same thing; so that it frequently happened, that two or three servants would be running after the Doctor, requesting that he would return to their masters or mistresses houses, who waited to receive him.

### A Johnson-Reynolds Dialogue

From Ted Hilles (Yale) comes a transcript of an interesting scene described in J. T. Smith's *A Book for a Rainy Day* (p. 131 of the 1861 edition). It appears to come from Col. Molesworth Phillips, friend of the Burneys and of Smith, who recorded the conversation long after the event. As Hilles points out, there is no date given for the party, no date when the record was made, but it is fairly clear that the conversation occurred within the last four years of Johnson's life and that the record was not made until after the appearance of Boswell's *Life*.

Johnson quoted someone on the "wonderful power" of the human eye.

**REYNOLDS:** Sir, that divine effect is produced by the parts appertaining to the eye, and not from its globe, as is generally supposed; the skull must be justly proportioned.

**MRS. CHOLMONDELEY:** My dear Sir Joshua, was there nothing in the magic of Garrick's eye? its comicality. The Duke of Richmond, the Duke of Dorset, and young Sheridan, have superb eyes; but I don't know what effect they would have on the stage.

**REYNOLDS:** Little or none, Madam; the great beauty of the Duke of Richmond's eye proceeded from its fine and uncommon colour, dark blue, which would be totally lost on the stage, the light being constantly either too high or too low. Garrick's eye, unaccompanied by the action of his mouth, would not fascinate. When you are near a person, a pretty woman for



instance, and have a good light, the contraction and expansion of the pupilla, which bids defiance to our art, is delightful; it is more perceptible in fine grey, and light blue eyes, than in any other colour. We, however, cannot deny the majestic look of the Belvedere Apollo, though unassisted by iris, pupil, eyelashes, or colour.

DR. JOHNSON: Sir, a tiger's eye, and I am told, a snake's, will intimidate birds, so that they will drop from trees for its prey, without using their wings.

(After Dr. Johnson had quaffed about twenty-four cups of tea, he gave a blow of considerable length from his mouth, drew his breath, and said: Sir, I believe you are right, it is but rational to suppose so: I wish that rogue Burke was here.)

### Sir Joseph Mawbey

Clarence Tracy (Alexander College, Fredericton, N.B.) writes about a biographical account of Thomas Cooke, the translator of Hesiod, which appeared in several issues of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1791. The author was Sir Joseph Mawbey, remembered as a political associate of Henry Thrale.

On the authority of Garrick, Mawbey tells in some detail of the baiting of Johnson, when he was at Oxford receiving his Doctor's degree, by some young men who admired Ossian and Home's *Douglas*. At the end he makes the same reply as that given in London in 1763, "Yes, Sir, many a man, many a woman, and many a child!" It would seem to us that this is merely a faulty version of the older anecdote, but there is a possibility that Johnson used the same retort to the students who were pulling his leg. A thorough comparison of the two anecdotes, however, might be rewarding.

Several others of Mawbey's remarks may bear repeating:

Cooke used to say, that Johnson was "half a madman, half a scholar, three parts a Roman Catholick, and a complete Jacobite."

Johnson was certainly a man of the first abilities and learning. My late friend, and your correspondent, Mr. Urban, Thomas Tyers, esq. who to a good heart united a considerable share of learning and genius, often desired to introduce me to him, with whom he lived on terms of much familiarity; but I always declined it from objection to his political principles. I met with him, however, at the house of Dr. Porteus, the present

Bishop of London, and at dinner at Mr. Thrale's, at Streatham; and, notwithstanding the prejudice I had imbibed against him, was greatly pleased with his strong, manly sense, and the manner in which he decided upon every subject of debate in language the most nervous. Whilst I admit that his judgement was clear and convincing in general, I thought it strange that he should not agree with me that Churchill was a poet of great poetical genius: perhaps Churchill's having ridiculed him for his credulity respecting the Cock-lane ghost might warp his judgement. When Mr. Tyers asked him, a few days afterwards, how he liked his friend, Sir Joseph Mawbey; I thought myself well off when he answered, "Better than I thought I should!" This did not prevent him, a short time afterwards, from putting me in the best company, when he reflected on Sir George Savile and myself in one of his political pamphlets, wherein he described Sir George and Sir Joseph as haranguing the mob. [LXI, 1183-84]

### Hannah More on Mrs. Garrick

Through the kindness of Cuthbert B. Pigot and Mary Alden Hopkins, we pass on the following from a notebook kept by the Misses Roberts when visiting Hannah More at Barley Wood, probably around 1830:

Mrs. Garrick — Mrs. H- M- in speaking of her told us she often went to the Protestant Churches when in the Country, & had one of our Prayerbooks constantly by her, the prayers in which she very much admired & commonly used & she had several times expressed her regret that she had not been born in a Protestant Country for then she should have been of that Religion but that she thought it right to continue in the Religion in which *we were born!* Altho' she was a woman of such correct & elegant taste in dress, that Ladies of the highest Rank would sometimes request her to come & look at them when drest for Court that she might rectify anything that was amiss, by her judgement, yet she did not by any means make her own dress a matter of any importance but on the contrary was very indifferent to it; Dr. Johnson who was sometimes more observant of these matters than would be supposed, once gave it as a test that Mrs. G- was a very good dresser, that people did not remark what she had on, meaning that everything was in such good keeping as to prevent any part of her attire from being too prominent--



## Work in Progress

Note: Most of the items listed this time are taken from the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* (1947) which Jim Osborn has called to our attention. The *Bulletin* lists theses completed and in progress in the British Universities on historical subjects — some close enough to literature to deserve our attention.

### General

COOMER, D. (Liverpool). *The Aims and Practices of the English Dissenters from the Close of Anne's Reign to the Rise of the Methodist Movement*. D. Liverpool.

CUTLER, P. (London). *Verse Satire in the Reign of Charles II*. D. London.

EMERY, JOHN P. (Temple Univ.). *An Edition of the Best Plays of Arthur Murphy* (Ready by Sept. 1948).

——— *An Edition of the Best English Plays from '1660 to 1900: Dryden to Wilde*.

HAMILTON, K. M. (London). *The Relation of the Arts in English Critical Theory of the Eighteenth Century, with Special Reference to the Years 1750-1780, Excluding Periodical Essays*. D. London.

PIGGOTT, S. (Oxford). *Antiquarian Research in Britain, 1650-1850*. D. Oxford.

SOMERVILLE, DAVID K. (Aberdeen). *British Pulpit Oratory, 1680-1850*. D. Aberdeen.

WASSERMAN, EARL R. (Illinois). *The Pleasures of Tragedy*. A study of 18th century theories of the source of pleasure in tragedy.

WOODWARD, J. O. (Oxford). *The Development of the Painting of Scenes from History and Literature in England during the Latter Half of the Eighteenth Century*. D. Oxford.

### Filmer, Sir Robert

LASLETT, T. P. R. (Cambridge). *A Study of Sir Robert Filmer*. D. Cambridge (in process).

### Henley, John

ROGERS, ROBERT W. (Harvard). *A Biographical Sketch of "Orator" John Henley*. (Assembling material).

### Locke, John

MACLEAN, A. H. (Cambridge). *The Sources of the Political Thought of John Locke*. D. Cambridge.

Pope, Alexander

KNIGHT, DOUGLAS (Yale). *Pope and the Heroic Tradition: a Critical Study of His Iliad.*

Pearce, Zachary

ANDREWS, W. S. (London). *The Life of Zachary Pearce, 1690-1774.* D. London.

Swift, Jonathan

TEERINK, H. (Arnhem, Netherlands). *Swift's Financial Position, His Household Expenses, Way of Living, Etc.*

Tenison, Thomas

CARPENTER, E. F. (London). *The Life and Times of Thomas Tenison, 1636-1715.* D. London.

*Further note:* We are delighted to see announced in the *TLS* for Oct. 25 that the M.L.A. is taking over the publication of a complete *Work in Progress*. We knew some such arrangement was being planned, but had not heard the complete details. The first issue will appear as a supplement to the *PMLA*, in March 1948. As soon as the new plan is smoothly working, the *JNL* will gladly bow out of the picture as a collector of 18th century projects, and will devote all its efforts to making the new publication as complete and useful as possible. We hope all of you will help as much as you can.

## 18th Century Get-Together in Detroit

We hope to see many of you in Detroit on Tuesday, Dec. 30, during the meetings of the M.L.A. Unfortunately, because of insurmountable scheduling difficulties, 18th century scholars will have to rush around that morning with more "enthusiasm" than befits Augustan decorum. But we trust you will all realize that there appears to have been no other way to arrange the program.

Group VII (the Defoe program) will be held in the Bagley Room of the Hotel Statler, 9:15-10:45. Then, for Group VIII, members must move over to the Italian Garden at the Book-Cadillac Hotel, 11:00-12:30.

The annual 18th century luncheon will be held immediately after Group VIII, at the Russian Samovar, 252 W. Lafayette St., opposite the Cass Theatre, one block away from the Book-Cadillac Hotel. The price for the luncheon will be about \$1.85, which will include sales tax and tips. Ursa Major at the Russian Samovar!

And here is a contest. How many times, and where, does Dr.

Johnson mention Russia in his conversation and in his works?  
Bring your answers to the luncheon.

### Boswell Manuscript to Bodleian

Through Katherine Hornbeak (Smith) we are very pleased to hear that when D. Nichol Smith boarded the Hotspur Clipper, May 31, to return to England, he carried with him a valuable scrap of paper destined for the Bodleian Library. Thus, after a lapse of over a century and a half, through the generosity of Colonel Ralph Isham, one of Boswell's good intentions was finally carried out. On May 19, 1778, Boswell, "for perfect authenticity," had Johnson make "with his own hand" a revision in "The Vanity of Human Wishes" already agreed on (*Life*, III, 357-58). Boswell had objected to the "too near recurrence of the verb *spread*, in his description of the young Enthusiast at College":

Through all his veins the fever of renown,  
Spreads from the strong contagion of the gown;  
O'er Bodley's dome his future labors spread,  
And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.

Boswell wrote out the first couplet, and Johnson wrote under *Spreads* (which is deleted) *Burns*. In a note Boswell adds: "The slip of paper on which he made the correction, is deposited by me in the noble library to which it relates...." (*Life*, III, 358, n. 1) Both Birkbeck Hill and Professor Nichol Smith, commenting on this note, reported that the paper, not in the Bodleian, had been lost. (See *The Poems of Samuel Johnson*, p. 36.)

When Nichol Smith, shortly before his return to England, called on Isham, the former learned that the manuscript was not really lost, and the latter learned that Boswell had intended to give it to the Bodleian. In a recent letter Nichol Smith writes: "Now after a hundred and fifty years it has reached the home that Boswell designed for it, after having made a flight that Boswell would have envied. I am certain that Colonel Isham will have the thanks of Johnsonians everywhere and of Boswellians too for carrying out Boswell's wishes."

### Dr. Johnson's Walking-Stick

In our last issue, you may remember, we passed on the announcement from the Library of Congress of the gift to the Library of a handsome black walking-stick supposed to have belonged to Dr.



Johnson. Now Col. Ralph Isham tells us that he is very doubtful of the authenticity of the relic, and we wonder if any of our readers can supply additional information concerning Johnson's sticks.

Here are some facts supplied by the Library of Congress upon the request of Isham. "A silver snuff-box is affixed to the head of the cane, with a smoky brown cairngorm set in its upper lid. On the band around the latter is an inscription, 'Dr/Samuel Johnson/1760.'" No silversmith's mark or date-letter is discernible on the snuff-box, but crudely scratched on the underside are the initials "J M" and the date "1837." All that is known of the provenance is that in 1860 the stick came into the possession of Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1796-1865), who was the author of the popular humorous sketches by "Sam Slick." In 1897 it was presented by his son to Thomas Francis Bayard, then Ambassador to Great Britain, and it has been given to the Library of Congress by his daughter.

There are various suspicious elements of the story. In the first place, as Isham points out, it does not jibe with Johnson's known plain tastes. Then the juxtaposition of "Dr" Johnson and the date 1760 in the inscription is peculiar, since Johnson did not receive his LL.D. until later. Moreover, the lack of information concerning the stick before 1860 is even more suspicious.

### Miscellaneous News Items

We welcome the news of the appointment of Louis B. Wright as Director of the Folger Library, and the plans to make it into an active research institution for the study of English civilization, particularly in the 18th and 17th centuries. To have another research library like the Huntington on the East Coast has long been the dream of many of our scholars. Now that dream appears likely to be realized. And we hope that the theatrical collections of the 18th century at Folger will be added to, and made easily available for students of the drama. All congratulations to Amherst College for its farsighted policy, and to Louis Wright for his vision in accepting the challenge.

We have been greatly pleased to hear from an ardent Johnsonian who lives in the Argentine. His name is A. S. Hall-Johnson (Corrientes 484, Buenos Aires), and he has been a collector of Johnsoniana since 1909. Recently, through the kind help of our friend Richard Hanson, who was in Buenos Aires on business,



Hall-Johnson sent up for us to see a scrapbook filled with clippings about Johnson, begun at the bi-centenary of Johnson's birth. Now comes more evidence of interest in Johnson in South America in a half-page appreciative journalistic article entitled "Dr. Samuel Johnson ('The Big-hearted Brute') Remembered among the Greatest English Writers," which appeared on Johnson's birthday, Sept. 18, in *The Standard* of Buenos Aires. It is pleasant to have established a link with Johnsonians south of the Equator.

Two recent bookseller's catalogues (Charles Tuttle, Rutland, Vt., and Horace G. Commin, 100 Old Christchurch Rd., Bournemouth, England) have included large lists of works on Johnson and his circle.

Our slightly disillusioned remark in the last issue concerning *The Hooded Hawk* has proved to be correct. John Gregory in the *New York Sun* for Oct. 22 calls it "a gorgeous book, a biography which quite probably will have no rival this season." Which one of us is wrong?

O. D. Savage has retired as Hon. Sec. of the Johnson Society of London, his successor being Frederick Nixon (136 Lexham Gardens, London W. 8).

It is good news to hear from E. S. de Beer that he is busily correcting proof on his great edition of Evelyn's diary. Printing of R. W. Chapman's edition of Johnson's letters moves ahead at a rapid pace.

We are still chuckling over a remark in a recent letter from Dougald MacMillan (N.C.). He commented that the last *JNL* arrived at a most opportune moment, "as I got it on my way to a class in which I was going to point out the vanity of human wishes. Instead, I just read them the *JNL*. Should I suggest that it served as well as Johnson's lines to illustrate the theme."

### A Few Recent Articles

An interesting attempt to establish William Walsh as the original of Sir Roger de Coverley may be found in Phyllis Freeman's "Who Was Sir Roger de Coverley?" *Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1947. Somehow your editor is not thoroughly convinced. What other evidence can any of you bring to bear on this argument?

An important article which all should ponder over is Bertrand Bronson's "Personification Reconsidered," *ELH*, Sept. 1947. We need more approaches to the poetry of the 18th century in this manner. Two other general articles which may be mentioned are

G. MacGregor's "Public Schools in the 18th Century," *Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1947; and S. T. McCly's "Rationalists and Religion in the Eighteenth Century," *SAQ*, Oct. 1947.

Concerned with Sterne is Lodwick Hartley's "Tristram and the Angels," *College English*, Nov. 1947. Two articles on Boswell are: B. G. MacCarthy's "James Boswell: a Problem" (a study of Boswell stemming from recent popular books about him), *Studies*, Sept. 1947; R. N. Carew Hunt's "A Fragment of Boswelliana" (correspondence between Sir Alexander, James, and Euphemia Boswell and John Heaviside, a surgeon), *The Nineteenth Century*, Nov. 1947. There are two discussions of Goldsmith: R. Wyse Jackson's "Goldsmith in Camouflage," *Dublin Magazine*, July-Sept. 1947; and Richard Clements' "The Social Teachings of Oliver Goldsmith," *Social Service*, Sept.-Nov. 1947.

### Recent Books

Important evidence of the authorship by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu of an anonymous periodical, *The Nonsense of Common-Sense*, is contained in a new edition of this periodical, brought out by Robert Halsband and printed in Northwestern Univ. Studies in the Humanities, No. 17. We have not yet seen a copy, but eagerly look forward to reading the essays and Halsband's presentation of the evidence concerning their authorship.

*A Bibliography of the Theophrastian Character etc.*, by C. N. Greenough, prepared for publication by Milton French, contains many 18th century items. The work has a superb set of indexes of authors, titles, subjects. Ben Boyce's discussion of the Theophrastian Character in England up to 1642 has also now appeared.

A few other books which should be mentioned are: Moody Prior's *The Language of Tragedy*, which includes some discussion of Restoration and 18th century plays; M. Ray Adams' *Studies in the Literary Backgrounds of English Radicalism* (Franklin and Marshall College); a revised edition of Lane Cooper's *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry*.

### First Follow Nature

An attractive, interesting book is Margaret Mary Fitzgerald's *First Follow Nature*, just published by the King's Crown Press. It is a well written study of the complex strands of primitivism in English poetry from 1725 to 1750 — a particularly rich



period which includes the best poetry of Pope, Thomson, Young, Akenside, Collins, the early work of the Wartons and Gray. She shows clearly how wide was the acceptance of different kinds of primitivism by neo-classicists and their opponents alike.

## 18th Century Newspapers

From George A. Schwegmann of the Union Catalogue Division of the Library of Congress we have the following information concerning films of English newspapers in this country. He will gladly receive news of other microfilms of long runs of newspapers.

*London Daily Advertiser*, 1731-1795.

Negative in the Library of Congress; positive copies owned by Yale, Harvard, Columbia, Chicago, Missouri, and State College of Wash. (part).

*London Evening Post*, 12 Dec. 1727 to 30 Dec. 1738

Microfilmed from Burney Collection by the M.L.A.; negative is in the Library of Congress. Positive copies may be secured from the Library of Congress.

*Grub Street Journal*, 8 Jan. 1730 to 29 Dec. 1737

Negative in the Harvard College Library.

*London Times*, 1795 to the present.

Microfilmed by Kodak. Ltd., London; copies available from Recordak Corp., New York City. Prints owned by Calif. (Berkeley), Chicago, Dartmouth, Minn., Missouri, Ohio State, Boston Public Library.

From H. B. Welty of the Philadelphia Bibliographical Center, Fine Arts Bldg., Univ. of Pa., we have the following: "The only file which we have here at the Bibliographical Center for microfilm is our own published Union List of Microfilms with the additional entries received by us since the appearance of the last supplement in July 1947. This is an alphabetical listing with no classified index; so, the best we can do is to offer to check it and the new cards for individual newspapers."

## A Correction

For subscribers to the *A.R.S.*: In the Introduction to the Corbyn Morris *Essay* (your editor unfortunately did not have an opportunity to check the final typescript), please insert brackets at the top of page 5 around "word apparently omitted" and "not identified"; also near the bottom of page 6 around "sic." Page 6, line 12, should read: "Walpole is praised for not curbing the press while necessarily curbing the theatre."

